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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 9, 1965

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Authority NSC 7-25-80 letter

By inf NARS, Date 9-2-80

SUBJECT: Vietnam - Telegrams from the Public

1. As of this morning, the White House had received about 1,500 telegrams concerning our action in Vietnam. White House tabulators regard the flow as medium to heavy. It is more than we had during the Panama crisis (800), about the same as we received during the Tonkin incident (1,650), and much less than we received during the Cuban crisis (12,700 in seven days).
2. So far as we can tell, the vast majority of the telegrams seem to be coming from private individuals rather than groups, and are running almost 12 to 1 against the Government's retaliatory action. It is pertinent to note that this is sharply different from the Gulf of Tonkin incident which produced a ratio of less than 2 to 1 against the Government's action. It is also interesting to note that, during the Panama crisis in January 1964, the cables ran roughly 14 to 1 in favor of a firm U.S. position.
3. A sample of 300 of the con telegrams produced the following rather interesting factors. First, the sources of a large proportion of the telegrams seemed geographically concentrated. The New York City area and California each produced about 34% of the telegrams; New England and the Middle Atlantic states (not including the New York City area) produced roughly 14% while the rest of the country produced about 18%. Second, women seemed to be most active in sending telegrams. Husband/wife teams accounted for about 39% of the telegrams, women for roughly 38%, and men for about 23%. Third, while they overlapped considerably, the most frequently mentioned substantive issues, in order of frequency, were (a) that we should negotiate, (b) that we are trigger happy and there will be escalation, (c) that we are aggressors and/or immoral, and (d) that we should withdraw.
4. While it seems somewhat dangerous to look for too much meaning in such a group of telegrams, they do point to certain tentative conclusions: First, the comparison with the Tonkin figures indicates that the propensity of the American people to punch the Communists in the nose over Vietnam seems considerably less than it was six months ago. Second, the comparison with

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the Panama figures (i.e., 14 to 1 in favor of a firm U.S. stand) are probably also instructive. In part, they may mean that Americans are more willing to stand firm when the issue is geographically closer to home. In part, they may also mean that Americans are more willing to stand firm as long as there is no relatively large-scale shooting involved. Third, the statistics, in general, indicate that we have an education problem that bears close watching and more work.

5. Attached for flavor is a random sample of ten con cables.

McGeorge Bundy

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